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XXII.—THOMAS KYD AND THE UR-HAMLET.

For some reason, the dramatist Kyd almost entirely dropped out of public notice during the 17th and 18th centuries. This is the more remarkable when we remember the popular favor which greeted certainly the *Spanish Tragedy* and perhaps other of his productions during the last decade of the 16th and the first quarter of the 17th century. It was one of the achievements of 19th century scholarship to restore Kyd to his place among the great Elizabethan dramatists. In this restoration, a single paragraph from Nash's prefatory Epistle to Greene's *Menaphon* has played a conspicuous rôle. It has now come to be all but universally accepted by scholars that this paragraph refers to Kyd, and in it are found not a few otherwise unknown facts of his literary history. This paragraph also has the distinction of containing the first reference in the English language to Hamlet; and a study of the context has led students to the opinion that, according to Nash, Kyd was the author of the Ur-Hamlet.

The two questions may be kept distinct: 1st, is Nash, in this paragraph, referring to Kyd and to no one else; 2nd, if so, does Nash mean to ascribe the Ur-Hamlet to Kyd? While there is practical unanimity of opinion among students of the subject it may be well to quote their conclusions.

Malone¹ enjoys the distinction of being the pioneer. "Not having seen the first edition of the tract till a few years ago, I formerly doubted whether the foregoing passage (in Nash) referred to the tragedy Hamlet; but the word Hamlets being printed in a different character from the rest, I have no

¹ *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, edited by the late Edward Malone, 1821.

longer any doubt on the subject." Vol. II, p. 371. "Perhaps the original Hamlet was written by Thomas Kyd." P. 372.

Widgery:¹ "We see, then, that this Epistle will refer to Kyd far better than it will to Shakespeare." P. 103.

Fleay² remarks, p. 119: "In the address prefixed to Greene's *Menaphon*, in a passage in which Nash has been satirising Kyd and another as void of scholarship and unable to read Seneca in the original, etc."

A similar opinion is held by Mr. Sidney Lee.³ "Kyd's career doubtless suggested to Nash (in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*) his description of those who, leaving 'the trade, etc.' When Nash proceeds to point out that Seneca's famished followers imitate the 'Kydde in Aesope' he is apparently punning on the dramatist's name."

Professor McCallum⁴ closes his discussion with these words:—"Unless or until this piece of evidence (that Kyd translated Italian) is explained away, Kyd's claim to the original Hamlet must be considered to have the preference" (over Shakespeare). P. 295.

No one has done so much to make plausible this whole Nash-Kyd theory as Sarrazin.⁵ P. 98: "Aus mehreren Gründen ist also die Hypothese, dass der Ur-Hamlet von Shakespeare selbst verfasst sei, ganz unhaltbar." P. 99: "Es ist jetzt möglich geworden, mit grosser wahrschein-

¹ *The First Quarto Edition of Hamlet*, 1603, London, 1880, Herford and Widgery.

² *A Chronicle History of the Life and Work of Shakespeare*, Frederick Gard Fleay, London, 1886.

³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, article *Thomas Kyd*.

⁴ *The Authorship of the Early Hamlet*, pp. 282-295, in *An English Miscellany*, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1901.

⁵ First in *Englische Studien*, vol. xv, and *Anglia*, vols. xii and xiii; and later in his *Thomas Kyd und sein Kreis*, von Gregor Sarrazin, Berlin, 1892. All citations in this article from Sarrazin are from his *Thomas Kyd und sein Kreis*.

lichkeit objectiv zu erweisen, was Malone, Widgery, u. a. mehr nach subjectivem Gefühl, instinctiv richtig erriethen."

Professor J. Schick,¹ p. xvi, remarks: "The 'Kiddle in Aesope'—this is indeed, I think, calling things by their names; surely Nash points here with his very finger to the person of Kyd." "We have no absolute proof that it (the paragraph from Nash) refers to Kyd and no one else; but unless as much light can be thrown on the passage, and as many items can be made to fit it, by substituting any other than Kyd's name, I think we may be allowed to interpret it in some such way as indicated above."

The crowning expression of the growing interest in Kyd is seen in the work of Boas.² In the introduction, p. xlv, we read, "It has been shown that, unless we are misled by a well-nigh incredible conspiracy of coincidences, Kyd must be the object of Nash's attack; and, consequently, the author of the early Hamlet-tragedy to which he derisively alludes." P. xlix: "Evidences of Kyd's authorship of it (Ur-Hamlet) have become practically conclusive."

Lastly, Schröer³ incidentally gives his opinion on the subject without giving any reason for dissenting from the position of Sarrazin and others. P. 88: "Die Hypothese eines Kyd'schen Ur-Hamlet scheint mir aber nach dem Gesagten noch mehr in der Luft zu schweben, wie die ganze Kyd'sche dramaturgische Gestalt selbst." P. 59: "Ich gehe auf die Hamletfrage hier nicht näher ein, da dies ohne Auseinandersetzung mit der gehaltvollen Arbeit Sarrazin's mit deren Resultaten ich vorläufig nicht übereinstimmen kann, nicht möglich wäre, und dies gehört eigentlich nicht

¹ *The Spanish Tragedy*, edited by J. Schick, J. M. Dent & Co., London, 1898.

² *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, edited by Frederick S. Boas, M. A., Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1901.

³ *Ueber Titus Andronicus*, Dr. M. M. Arnold Schröer, Marburg, 1891.

hierher." Whether Schröer has changed his views with the years we do not know. I have placed his name out of its chronological order to accentuate the fact that, so far as I know, he alone has dissented from the opinion universally held by scholars since the time of Malone. It is the purpose of this paper to present the arguments put forth by Sarrazin, Schick, Boas, and others in favor of Nash's reference to Kyd's authorship of the early Hamlet; to criticise these arguments and to present new evidence against the entire theory. How far my reasons are identical with those which led Schröer in 1891 to be skeptical, I do not know.

The sole source of external evidence for many of the supposed facts of Kyd's life and in favor of his authorship of the Ur-Hamlet is the 8th paragraph in Nash's Epistle introducing Greene's *Menaphon*.

But least I might seeme with these night crowes, Nimis curiosus in aliena republica, I'll turne backe to my first text, of studies of delight, and talk a little in friendship with a few of our triuiall translators. It is a common practise now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every arte and thrive by none, to leaue the trade of Nouerint whereto they were borne, and busie themselues with the endeours of Art, that could scarcely latinize their necke-verse if they should haue neede; yet English Seneca read by candle light yeildes manie good sentences, as Bloud is a beggar, and so forth; and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say, handfulls of tragical speeches. But 'o grieffe! tempus edax rerum, what's that will last alwaies? The sea exhaled by droppes will in continuance be drie, and Seneca let bloud line by line and page by page, at length must needes die to our stage: which makes his famisht followers to imitate the Kidde in Aesop, who enamored with the Foxes newfangles, forsooke all hopes of life to leape into a new occupation; and these men renouncing all possibilities of credit or estimation, to intermeddle with Italian translations; wherein how poorelie they haue plodded (as those that are neither prouenzall men, nor able to distinguish of Articles), let all indifferent Gentlemen that haue trauailed in that tongue, discern by their twopenie pamphlets; and no meruaile though their home-borne mediocritie be such in this matter; for what can be hoped of those, that thrust Elisium into hell, and haue not learned so long as they haue liued in the spheares, the just measure of the Horizon without an hexameter. Sufficeth them to bodge up a blanke verse

with ifs and ands, and other while for recreation after their candle stuffe, hauing starched their beardes most curiouslie, to make a peripateticall path into the inner parts of the Citie, and spend two or three howers in turning ouer French Doudie, where they attract more infection in one minute, than they can do eloquence all dayes of their life, by conuersing whith anie authors of like argument.

From this paragraph it has been argued: 1. That though the plural is used, the author has but one person in mind; 2. That the details here given agree with the otherwise known facts of Kyd's life; 3. That certain references here to *The Spanish Tragedy* show Nash is referring to Kyd. I shall take up these arguments, quoting the words of the chief defenders of the theory. I shall then, 4, name some points of disagreement between the passage and the known facts of Kyd's life.

I. As to the plural. "Wenn auch Manches in diesen Anspielungen dunkel ist und vielleicht immer dunkel bleiben wird, so geht doch soviel zunächst mit ziemlicher Sicherheit daraus hervor, dass sie sich nicht auf mehrere, sondern auf eine einzige Person beziehen; denn es ist eine ganz einheitliche und individuell bestimmte Characterzeichnung, die darin entworfen wird. Aehnlich spricht Nash in derselben Epistel von 'idiot art masters' und 'vain-glorious tragedians' und meint damit nur Christopher Marlowe; der plural dient nur zur Verhüllung des persönlichen Angriffs." Sarrazin, p. 100. "The use of the plural, . . . is evidently a mere rhetorical device, as so elaborate an indictment could only be aimed at a single personage." Boas, p. xx.

No one has thought it worth while to suggest any motive, plausible or otherwise, for Nash's concealing his personal opinion of Kyd. Certainly it was not his own native reserve nor over-sensitiveness at the pain he might cause another. Nor could it be, so far as we know, on social grounds or financial, as these men belonged to rival theatrical

companies.¹ Moreover, savage attacks upon literary fellow-workers were then in vogue.² Besides, the argument of Sarrazin that Nash may be interpreted as alluding here to one person while still using the plural because earlier in the Epistle he uses the plural and means no one but Marlowe, does not clinch the point at all; for, the second and third paragraphs of the Epistle, containing the supposed references to Marlowe, are just as applicable to Peele as to Marlowe, and hence Sarrazin has no right to say Nash here means "nur Christopher Marlowe." Furthermore it is interesting to note that Fleay (p. 119), while thinking the paragraph is aimed at Kyd, sees at the words "what can be hoped of those, etc.," a turning from Kyd to Marlowe. And also Professor Thorndike,³ while holding that Nash's allusions fit Kyd better than any one else, still thinks "it may possibly refer to more than one dramatist."⁴ That is to say, the paragraph evidently does not so unmistakably point to one person as even to convince those who see in it a reference to Kyd. The use of the plural without any adequate motive for concealment will have to be counterbalanced by clear personal reference to an individual, if we are to think the paragraph refers to one person and to one person only. Whether an interpretation of the paragraph making it refer to one person only, can satisfy the context will be discussed later.

¹ Fleay, pp. 10-15.

² If it can be shown that the reference is to Kyd, then it is quite possible, as Prof. Manly has suggested to me, that Nash (contrary to the view of Sarrazin) had no intention of concealment, that his thrusts at the dramatist would be easily recognized by those to whom they were addressed and that Nash chose this method, rather than the more direct one, purely for rhetorical effect.

³ *Mod. Lang. Notes*, vol. xvii, p. 290.

⁴ It may be worthy of note that those who see in the paragraph references to one or more dramatists besides Kyd are confronted by the additional difficulty of determining to what one Nash means to give the credit for the Ur-Hamlet.

II. Agreement of details of paragraph with otherwise known facts of Kyd's life.

a. "Ferner trifft es zu, dass jener Dichter zum Beruf des 'Noverint' geboren war, denn Thomas Kyds Vater war ja, wie wir gesehen haben, Notar, also einer, der solche mit 'Noverint universi' beginnende Urkunden abfasste; ob er selbst diesen Beruf erwählt und nachher aufgegeben hatte, wissen wir nicht, können es aber wegen der Vorliebe für Process-Scenen und einiger juristischer Kunstausrücke, wie 'Ejectio firma,' 'sub-forma pauperis,' vermuthen. Sarrazin, p. 100. "Thomas Kyd's father being a scrivener, the son was indeed literally 'born to the trade of noverint.'" Schick, p. x. "Kyd, the scrivener's son, was certainly born to the trade, and Nash seems to imply that he followed it for a time, before leaving it to 'busie' himself with the 'indeuors' of art." Boas, p. xxi. The various attempts to show what trades and professions Shakespeare was probably an apprentice in, by citing his use of semi-technical words, must give us pause before the similar attempts of Sarrazin, Boas, and others to show that Kyd probably was himself a scrivener. There is however no denying the fact that Kyd's father was one. Whether Nash here means to refer to Kyd's father will be discussed later.

b. "Zunächst scheint schon der Vergleich mit dem Zicklein (Kidde) einer Aesopischen Fabel, welches sich in die neumodische Tracht des Fuchses verliebt, eine Anspielung auf den Namen des Dichters zu enthalten.¹

¹ Um so mehr als diese Fabel eine freie Variation Nashs ist. Keine der Aesopischen Fabeln, in welcher ein Zicklein oder Bock vorkommt, hat einen ähnlichen Inhalt; wohl aber ist in einer derselben (*Fabulae Aesopicae*, ed. Camerarius, p. 221, vgl. *Phaedri abularum Aesopiarum libri quinque*, ed. Luc. Mueller, p. 68) von einem Affen die Rede, welcher den Fuchs wegen seines schmucken Felles und seines schönen Schwanzes beneidet. Nash hat also offenbar statt des Affen das Zicklein in die Fabel hinein escamotirt, um ein Wortspiel auf Kyd zu gewinnen."—Sarrazin, p. 100.

"The 'Kidde in Aesop'—this is indeed, I think, calling

things by their names; surely Nash points here with his very finger to the person of Kyd." Schick, p. xi.

Two things ought to be said of this argument: First, Sarrazin's suggestion, that Nash had altered the original fable to make it fit the case, had great weight until Koepfel (*Eng. Studien*, vol. XVIII, p. 130) pointed out that Nash was here borrowing from Spencer's *Shepherd's Calender*, May, lines 274-277,

Tho out of his packe a glasse he tooke,
Wherein while Kidde unawares did looke,
He was so enamored with the newell,
That nought he deemed deare for the jewell.

Here is the Kyd and Fox story and the word "enamored" makes it clear Nash had this passage in mind; especially, as he elsewhere in this short Epistle praises Spencer, thus showing himself familiar with the poet's work. Secondly, accepting Koepfel's criticism as final, the matter reduces itself to the old "six of one and half a dozen of the other." If the thought fits Kyd and him only or if elsewhere in the paragraph Nash is alluding to Kyd, this is a clever pun; if, however, nothing unmistakably in the context points to Kyd, there is nothing in the words "the Kidde in Aesop" to give the slightest reason for thinking here Nash's mind was on Kyd. The use of the word "lamb" in an English book of 1833 does not give the slightest presumption that the author was thinking of Elia, nor the occurrence of "Fox" in an essay of 1685 that the writer had his mind on George Fox.

c. "Es wird ferner auf die Beschäftigung mit französischen und italienischen Uebersetzungen angespielt. In der Sp. Tr. kommen mehrfach italienische Citate vor, sowie ein Hinweis auf die Aufführungen italienischer Schauspieler (S. 152). Aus diesen Gründen und wegen der meist italienischen oder italienisch klingenden Eidgenossen der Sp. Tr. könnte man

versucht sein eine italienische Quelle anzunehmen. Unzweifelhaft aber ist, dass Kyd Garniers Cornelia aus dem Französischen ins Englische übersetzt hat; das französische 'Weibsbild' dürfte auf eben dies Drama gemünzt sein, welches freilich erst 1594 im Druck erschien, aber doch schon einige Jahre vorher verfasst sein kann." Sarrazin, p. 101. That Kyd knew Italian and translated it is admitted by all. This fact by itself proves little, because Italian was so generally known by literary people of the time and there were translations by the hundred.¹ Nor must it be forgotten that, as Kyd's pamphlet from the Italian dates from 1586 and the Epistle from August, 1589, we are paying the general intelligence of the students quite a compliment in supposing these youths knew of this translation and saw in Nash's reference to such a translation, an allusion to Kyd.

III. Allusions to *The Spanish Tragedy* in the paragraph of such a character as to indicate Nash has its author in mind.

a. "Namentlich aber trifft auf Kyd zu, dass der Verfasser des Ur-Hamlet als Nachahmer Senecas charakterisirt ist. Bei der Cornelia, die ganz im Stile Senecas gehalten ist, kann man freilich die Nachahmung nur als indirekt, durch Garnier vermittelt bezeichnen. Aber auch die Sp. Tr. zeigt fast auf jeder Seite den Einfluss Senecas." Sarrazin, p. 101. "He had Seneca's dramas at his fingers ends. In *The Spanish Tragedy* almost every one of them is drawn upon," Boas, p. xvii. No one has ever doubted that Seneca exerted a considerable influence upon Kyd. This influence is an accepted fact. But it is just as widely accepted that scarcely a dramatic contemporary of Kyd's escaped the Senecan influence. If we may suppose the bewildered stu-

¹ Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England*, 1903, Chap. VII, and Miss M. A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian*, *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, 1895-1899.

dents questioning each other as to the meaning of Nash's dark paragraph, we may be sure that the veiled figure having been influenced by Seneca would give them little if any clue.

b. "Ein sehr betreffender Hieb ist es auch, wenn auf die Manier, den Blankvers mit 'ifs' und 'ands' auszuflicken, hingewiesen wird. Man vergleiche z. b.:

Sp. Tr. II : i : 122-5 :

"And with that sword he fiercely waged war,
And in that war he gave me dangerous wounds,
And by those wounds he forced me to yield,
And by yielding I became his slave."

Sp. Tr. III : 13 : 98-100.

"If love's effects so strive in lesser things,
If love enforce such moods in meaner wits,
If love express such power in poor estates."

Sarrazin, p. 101.

But Schick, p. xii, and Boas, p. xxix, make the "ifs" and "ands" refer to the *Spanish Tragedy*, II : i : 79, quoting,

"What, villaine, ifs and ands."

Surely no one can reasonably assent to the contention that in the words "to bodge up a blank verse with 'ifs' and 'ands'" we have a clear reference to the *Spanish Tragedy* when those making the contention do not agree as to what line or lines the words refer to. Besides, as Kyd was not the only writer of his time who began successive lines with "and" or "if,"¹ nor the only one who used the phrase "ifs and ands,"² these words of Nash would by no means neces-

¹ Cf. *Gorboduc*, IV : 2 : 234-235, III : i : 16-18; *Wounds of Civil War* (Dodsley-Hazlett, vol. 7), pp. 124, 184, 157, 168, 114, 112; *Arraignement of Paris*, IV : i : 269-271, II : i : 138-139. For these and scores of other instances of repetition of initial "and" and "if" in contemporary English plays I am indebted to Prof. F. G. Hubbard of the University of Wisconsin.

² Bang, *Englische Studien*, vol. 28, p. 282.

sarily suggest to their readers the author of the *Spanish Tragedy*.

c. "When Nash speaks of 'thrusting Elisium into hell' he is alluding to the *Spanish Tragedy*, 1:1:72.... The sneer at those who 'have not learned the just measure of the hexameter' is directed at Kyd's borrowing the details of his picture of the lower world from the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, *Sp. Tr.*, 1:1:18-25," Boas, p. xxix. But this is supposing that Nash and the University students to whom the Epistle is directed, these young men (Nash himself was but 22) who had never held a copy of the *Spanish Tragedy* in their hands, only a small fraction of whom had ever seen it played (assuming for the moment that it was then in existence),—this is, I say, supposing that these young men are like the members of a 19th century University Seminar who know by heart every line of the poem or play they are studying. It is not impossible that they did so know it, but it is highly improbable. But be this as it may, Nash, with his mind on the *Sp. Tr.*, 1:1:72-73, would not have accused Kyd of stupidly thrusting "Elisium into hell," for the very obvious reason that Virgil, whom Kyd is so closely following here, has Aeneas view, in Hades, the same blissful fields.¹ Kyd is guilty of no blunder in lines 72-73, and hence Nash cannot have this line in mind when he wrote "what can be hoped of those that thrust Elisium into hell."

IV. Some points of disagreement.

a. Nash's words that they (Kyd) "could scarcely latinize their neck verse if they should have need" must, according to Boas, p. xlvi, be "largely discounted"; this is "stretching a satirist's licence to its limits," p. xlv. "Kyd, moreover, had a certain faculty of classical composition," p. xviii. "He is familiar with a fairly wide range of classical authors

¹ Cf. *Sp. Tr.* 1:1:60-75 with the *Aeneid* vi: 440-702.

but probably did not enjoy a "methodical University training," p. xvii. "The scurrilous depreciation of his rival's classical attainments." "Still he knew his Seneca thoroughly in the original," p. xlv. Now, there are two alternatives open: either to say with Boas that Nash has "scurrilously depreciated" Kyd's classical learning and that here he fails to tell the truth; or that these words are so far from true that Nash cannot here be speaking of Kyd. One ought to take the former alternative if there are some other things that taken alone or cumulatively point to Kyd, and besides if there are only few that contradict what we otherwise know of him; we ought to take the latter if the fixed points are few and if other important discrepancies are found.

6. Nash implies, so say the critics, that they (Kyd), knowing so little Latin, turn to the English translation of Seneca. Here again Boas, p. xlv, admits Nash's charge that Kyd was guilty of "bleeding English Seneca line by line and page by page must be exaggerated." Still "English Seneca has a strong influence upon him," p. xxiv. In spite of this affirmation not a single citation is made to substantiate it, nor has any one, so far as I have seen, pointed out in the *Spanish Tragedy* or elsewhere in Kyd a single line borrowed from the translations of Seneca then accessible. Perhaps borrowing can be pointed out, but as yet this has not been done. Boas does say, p. xlv, "In a passage like Act III: i: 1-11 of the *Spanish Tragedy* where lines 57-73 of the Roman dramatist's *Agememnon* are adopted into English, an unfriendly eye might see the influence of a translation." I reproduce lines 1-11 of the *Spanish Tragedy* III and lines 57-73 from the only English translation of Seneca's *Agamemnon* now known to be in existence in 1589.

"Unfortunate condition of kings,
Seated amidst so many helpless dounts!
First we are plac'd upon extremest height,

And oft supplanted with exceeding hate,
 But ever subject to the wheel of chance ;
 And at our highest never joy we so,
 As we both doubt and dread our overthrow.
 So striveth not the waves with sundry winds,
 As fortune toileth in the affairs of kings,
 That would be feared, yet fear to be belov'd,
 Sith fear or love to kings is flattery."

Sp. Tr. III : i : 1-11.

Agamemnon.

" O Fortune, that dost fayle the great estate of kinges.
 On slippery sliding seat thou placest lofty things
 And setst on tottering sort, where perils do abound
 Yet never kingdome calme, nor quiet could be fond ;
 No day to Scepters sure doth shine, that they might say,
 To morrow shall we rule, as we have done today.
 One clod of croked care another bryngeth in,
 One hurly burly done, another doth begin :
 Not so the raging Sea doth boyle upon the Sande,
 Where as the southern winde that blows in Afryck lande,
 One wave upon another doth heape wyth sturdy blast ;
 Not so doth Euxene Sea, his swelling waves upcast ;
 Nor so his belching streame from shallow bottom roll,
 That borders hard upon the ysy frosen poall :
 Where as Bootes bryght doth twyne his Wayne about,
 And of the marble seas doth nothing stande in doubt.
 O how doth Fortune tosse and trouble in her wheele
 The staggering states of Kynges, that readdy bee to reele?
 Fayne would they dreaded bee, and yet not settled so,
 When they feared are, they feare, and live in woe."

I leave it to the reader to determine whether even an "unfriendly eye" could see any borrowing here.¹

In criticising these arguments in detail I have not presumed to offer a full refutation, but rather have sought to show merely on what slender foundation a superstructure has been reared. If I have succeeded in making it plain that the current exegesis of the famous paragraph finds itself

¹ Prof. Manly has called my attention to the fact that the "borrowing" seems to have been made, not from the translation, but from the Latin !

in many embarrassments, my purpose is attained. Of course there is a limit to the burden of difficulties any hypothesis can carry.

What remains is to present a new interpretation of the paragraph. It is remarkable that hitherto no writer on the subject has so much as mentioned the paragraph's immediate context. An analysis of Nash's Epistle shows four clearly marked divisions :

1. Paragraphs 1-7. A plea for the kindly reception of the *Menaphon* on the part of the students at the Universities. A plea is necessary because its simple style and originality will not at once be attractive to those whose habits and tastes have recently been spoiled by the "vain glorious tragedians."

2. Paragraphs 8-13. Concerning early eminent translators, their work and that of their successors.

3. Paragraphs 14-15. A witty digression on wine and the production of poetry.

4. Paragraphs 16-18. English writers compare favorably with those of the continent.

We are concerned here with the second part only (paragraphs 8-13), the first paragraph of which is the one under discussion. Beginning with the second paragraph (9th) the argument is as follows :

2nd (9th). But lest I should condemn all translators and commend none, I shall name first those continental scholars who have labored successfully in translation ; Erasmus "that invested most of our Greek writers, in the Roabes of the Ancient Romaines" and Melancthon, Sadolet, and Plantine who "merviouslylie inriched the Latine tongue with the expense of their toyle."

3rd (10th). It later became the custom in this country to exhibit one's Latin learning in English print. William Turner, Sir Thomas Eliot, Sir Thomas Moore made names for themselves here and St. John's College, Cambridge,

became a famous center from which went out such scholars as "Sir John Cheek a man of men, supernaturally traded in all tongues."

4th (11th). But the good practices of the past are now forgotten. The present short cut to learning is deplorable, viz. that of leaving the reading of standard classical authors for "mere Epitomes (summaries), leaving the fountains of Science, to follow the rivers of Knowledge." As a result our students know little Latin and yet both in translation and gloss are constantly exhibiting this little.

5th (12th). Yet some scholars of the present are worthy of praise. Gascoigne deserved imitation. Turberville's work is good "though in translating he attributed too much to the necessitie of rime." Arthur Golding is to be remembered "for his industrious toile in Englishing Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, besides many other exquisite editions of Divinitie, turned by him out of the French tongue." Master Phaer has left us his "famous Virgil" and Master Francis an "excellent translation of Master Thomas Watson's sugred Amintas."

6th (14th). Good poets must now be very rare, for no one of late "durst imitate any of the worst of these Romane wonders in English" and no one has shown himself "singular in any special Latin poem." Though Hoddon, Carre, "Thomas Newton with his Leydon," and Gabriel Harvey deserve mention. A man is unworthy the name of scholar who is not also a poet.

It is very clear that what Nash has his mind upon in the last five of the six paragraphs in this division is classical scholarship; sometimes he is thinking of it historically, as in the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs; sometimes pedagogically, as in the 4th paragraph. Of the twenty-five scholars mentioned, nine are explicitly named as translators of the ancient classics, and a study of their biographies shows that the remainder

are all famous only for their classical scholarship. There is not a word about French or Italian translations, except the incidental remark concerning Arthur Golding quoted above. Always, too, in Nash's mind is the conviction that the present state of classical attainments is quite below what it once was and should be. How, now, shall we interpret the first paragraph, the oft-quoted one beginning with the words "and talk a little in friendship with a few of our trivial translators," a paragraph which no reader of the *Epistle* will fail to connect with the five summarized above? Can this opening paragraph refer to one man, a dramatist, Kyd, whom no one has ranked as a classical scholar and who if he be referred to in the paragraph is said to know no Latin? I cannot think so. Moreover I do not think Kyd's name would ever have been associated with the paragraph had the context been carefully scanned. To say the point of the paragraph consists in an attack upon a dramatist of rather low birth who, after vainly seeking success in other callings, adopts the literary profession, writing his plays under the influence of an English translation of Seneca, obliges one to make a very violent transition at Nash's second paragraph which begins, "But least in this declamatorie vaine I should condemne all and commend none, I will propound to your learned imitation, those men of import, that have labored with credit in this laudible kind of translation." Again if these "trivial translators" of "now-a-days" of the 8th paragraph means Kyd, when after speaking of famous translators in the 9th and 10th paragraphs Nash comes back again to the present in the 11th and 12th paragraphs with the opening words, "But how ill their precepts have prospered with an idle age . . . their overfrought studies, with trifling compendiarie maie testifie," he must again be speaking of Kyd. How ill these paragraphs, full of criticism of the classical scholarship of the day, fit the dramatist Kyd, a

single reading will convince anyone. If it can be shown that but one person is referred to in this paragraph, the person must in his accomplishments resemble the group mentioned in the following paragraph, *i. e.* must be a person of profound classical attainment and not one whose classical deficiencies are referred to incidentally.

But does the content of this paragraph fit any better the preceding context? In the opening sentence we have the words "I'll turn back to my first text of studies of delight, and talk a little in friendship with a few of our trivial translators." In the 3rd paragraph of the Epistle, Nash has said that these "vain glorious tragedians" feed on "nought but the crummes that fall from the translators trenchers." Surely the natural interpretation here will identify the "translators" of the 3rd paragraph and the "trivial translators" of the 8th, as Nash distinctly says he will "turn back" to them. But no one will maintain that Kyd was the "translators" from whom the Marlowe school drew; rather, it seems clear that these "translators" must have been translators of the ancient classics, most likely translators of Seneca. The position of this paragraph in a section treating of classical scholars and their work is overwhelmingly against the theory that the paragraph refers to the dramatist, Kyd. So clear is the logical order of these paragraphs, so evident is their general meaning, so serious their purpose, so absurdly irrelevant any digression on Kyd, so free are the paragraphs from any suggestion of a digression that we do the utmost violence to the context if we hold the paragraph in question was directed against the author of the *Spanish Tragedy*. We surely err gravely if we interpret sentence or paragraph without due regard to their context. This is the error all recent writers on Kyd have committed.

The difficulties of the current exegesis of the paragraph have been sufficiently exposed. These are many and serious.

It remains to offer a substitute interpretation of this famous paragraph. The following is a free rendering, but designed to express every idea of any importance in the paragraph: I desire to revert to what I was talking about at the opening of the Epistle and say a few words in a friendly fashion (spoken ironically) about some of our hack translators of the day. It is quite common now-a-days for a set of incapable fellows who are jacks of all trades and masters of none, whom nature intended to do mere clerical work ("noverint whereto they were borne"¹) to betake themselves to scholarly tasks, though their classical learning is very slight indeed. One of the products of these hack translators is the rendering of Seneca into English. Now these translations of the Roman dramatist are not wholly bad, for you will find in them such a fine alliterative sentence (probably penned with a twinkle of Nash's eye) as "Blood is a beggar" and there may also be found "whole Hamlets, I should say, handfulls of tragical speeches." To be serious, however, these translations of Seneca are wretched, they literally murder the original Seneca ("Seneca let blood line by line and page by page") not once or twice but everywhere. Even these hack translators themselves feel their work to be so poor that they see Seneca will soon lose his vogue on the English stage. In anticipation of this they (hack writers) are turning from the translation of Latin to the translation of Italian. It is not to be wondered at if in this last venture they do ill, for what good can be hoped of those who have transformed good Latin into wretched English ("thrust Elisium into hell") and who stupidly persist in translating

¹ "whereuppon I thought it as good for mee to reape the frute of my owne labours, as to let some unskilful pen-man or Noverint-Maker starch his ruffe and new spade his beard with the benefit he made of them."—*The Works of Nash*, ed. by Grosart, vol. III, p. 214.

Latin hexameters into English hexameters.¹ These men having no fine literary sense are content to patch up their verse with *ifs* and *ands*; nor are their morals better, for when night has come, disguised they associate with French women² of questionable character from whom they will take more defilement in one minute than they can speak eloquence in the remainder of their lives.

Are there difficulties in this interpretation?

1. "Blood is a beggar." It may, with right, be objected that this sentence is not in the translation of Seneca edited by Newton in 1581. But surely Nash's words "manie good sentences, as 'Bloud is a beggar'" must be irony, as no one would call this slight alliterative predication "good." Nash is here jesting at the alliteration used by the Senecan translator on every page.

2. "Whole Hamlets." The meaning is, in English Seneca will be found either (1) characters much like Hamlet, or (2) plays as full of tragical speeches as either (*a*) the well-known play of Hamlet, or (*b*) as the prose tale of Hamlet. The language is not sufficiently explicit to warrant a dogmatic statement.

3. "Intermeddle with Italian translations." It may be said the translators of the 1581 Seneca (Studley, Nuce, Neville, Heywood, and Newton) did not later betake themselves to Italian translations. But a reference to the Epistle will make it clear that no violence is done to the paragraph in making Nash refer primarily to "trivial translators" in

¹ Thus interpreted, the words, "have not yet learned the just measure of the Horizon without an hexameter" not only fit perfectly Nash's argument in the paragraph, but they are also in harmony with his views expressed elsewhere. Cf. *Works of Thomas Nash*, edited by Grosart, vol. II, p. 218: "For that was a plannet exalted above their hexameter Horizon;" *ibidem*, pp. 237-238, Nash at length inveighs against the use of the hexameter in English.

² Professor McCallum, p. 294; and Professor Thorndike, p. 290.

general, and only incidentally to the translators of Seneca. When he speaks of turning to translate Italian he has departed from his specific illustration and reverted to the genus, "trivial translators," whom he has in mind throughout the six paragraphs. Thus interpreted, Nash's words are strictly true to the trend of events in August, 1589. Senecan influence had been dominant on the English stage for thirty years, but beginning with 1590, *i. e.* with the career of Shakespeare, Seneca's influence is clearly on the rapid decline. Italian influences rather than Latin were from the start powerful with the bard of Avon.¹ Nash may not have been right in assigning the cause of the Senecan decline to poor translations, but he was perfectly right about the decline, as he was also respecting the new forces which were superseding the old.

I believe we may say with considerable confidence that over against an interpretation of the paragraph full of difficulties and obscurities we may have an interpretation wherein the difficulties are extremely slight, if indeed they may be said to exist at all. Moreover the interpretation given above unifies the paragraph as the current interpretation does not: The failure of the hack translators of the classics is its unifying theme. With this interpretation the paragraph is in logical harmony with its whole context, as is its idea consonant with that of the whole Epistle. Moreover, its words, as was shown above, give a true account of the literary history of the time.

The conclusion reached is twofold: 1st, Nash has not Kyd in mind in this paragraph nor indeed any dramatist at all; 2nd, this paragraph throws no light upon the authorship of the Ur-Hamlet, nor indeed is it perfectly clear that Nash knew of a Hamlet drama.

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¹ Einstein, Chapter VIII.